NUMB. LXXXII.

The GUARDIAN.

Cedat uti conviva Satur —— Hor.

Monday, June 15. 1713.

THOUGH Men see every Day People go to their long Home, who are younger than themselves, they are not so apt to be alarmed at that, as at the Decease of those who have lived longer in their sight: They miss their Acquaintance, and are surprized at the loss of an habitual Object. This gave me so much Concern for the Death of Mr. *William Peer* of the Theatre-Royal, who was an Actor at the Restoration, and took his Theatrical Degree with *Betterton*, *Kynaston* and *Harris*. Tho' his Station was humble he performed it well, and the common Comparison with the Stage and Human Life, which has been so often made, may well be brought out upon this Occasion. It is no matter, say the Moralists, whether you act a Prince or a Beggar, the Business is to do your Part well. Mr. *William Peer* distinguished himself particularly in two Characters, which no Man ever could touch but himself, one of them was the Speaker of the Prologue to the Play, which is contrived in the Tragedy of *Hamlet*, to awake the Consciences of the guilty Princes. Mr. *William Peer* spoke that Preface to the Play with such an Air as represented that he was an Actor, and with such an inferior manner as only acting an Actor, as made the others on the Stage appear real great Persons, and not Representatives. This was a nicety in Acting that none but the most subtle Player cou'd so much as conceive. I remember his speaking these Words, in which there is no great matter, but in the right adjustment of the Air of the Speaker, with universal Applause.

For us and for our Tragedy,
Here stooping to your Clemency,
We beg your Hearing patiently.

Hamlet says very archly upon the pronouncing of it, *Is this a Prologue, or a Poesie of a King*? However, the speaking of it got Mr. *Peer* more Reputation, than those who speak the length of a Puritans Sermon every Night will ever attain to. Besides this Mr. *Peer* got a great Fame on another little occasion. He Played the Apothecary in *Caius Marius*, as it is called by *Otway*, but *Romeo* and *Juliet*, as originally in *Shakespear*; it will be necessary to recite more out of the Play than he spoke, to have a right Conception of what *Peer* did in it. *Marius*, weary of Life, recollects Means to be rid of it after this manner.

I do remember an Apothecary
That dwelt about this rendezvous of Death,
Meagre and very rueful were his Looks,
Sharp Misery had worn him to the Bones.

When this Spectre of Poverty appeared, *Marius* addresses him thus:

I see thou art very Poor,
Thou mayst do any thing, here's fifty Drachma's,
Get me a Draught of what will soonest free
A Wretch from all his Cares.

When the Apothecary objects that it is unlawful, *Marius* urges;

Art thou so base, and full of Wretchedness,
Yet fear'st to die; Famine is in thy Cheeks,
Need and Oppression stareth in thy Eyes,
Contempt and Beggary hang on thy Back;
The World is not thy Friend, nor the World's Laws.
The World affords no Law to make thee Rich;
Then be not poor, but break it, and take this.

Without all this Quotation the Reader could not have a just idea of the Visage and Manner which *Peer* assumed, when in the most lamentable Tone imaginable he consents; and delivering the Poison, like a Man reduced to the drinking it himself, if he did not vend it, says to *Marius*,

My Poverty, but not my Will, consents.
Take this and drink it off. The Work is done.

It was an odd Excellence, and a very particular Circumstance this of *Peer*'s, that his whole Action of Life depended upon speaking five Lines better than any Man else in the World. But this Eminence lying in so narrow a Compass, the Governors of the Theatre, observing his Talents to lie in a certain Knowledge of Propriety, and his Person admitting him to shine only in the two above Parts, his Sphere of Action was enlarged by the Addition of the Post of Property-Man: This Officer has always ready, in a Place appointed for him behind the Prompter, all such Tools and Implements as are necessary in the Play, and it is his Business never to want *Billetdoux*, Poison, false Money, Thunderbolts, Daggers, Scrowls of Parchment, Wine, Pomatum, Truncheons and Wooden-legs, ready at the Call of the said

Promp-

(Price Two Pence)